

Washington State Patrol Media Release

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Washington State Patrol's Traffic Enforcement Aircraft Highly Effective

Chief Ronald W. Serpas announced today that the Washington State Patrol (WSP) traffic enforcement aircraft provide an invaluable tool for enforcing traffic laws that result in the reduction of collisions. The Patrol conducts aerial traffic enforcement utilizing five fixed-wing Cessna 182 airplanes. Three of these small aircraft are located at the Olympia Airport and two are located in Yakima for use in Eastern Washington.

The aircraft, as compared to the use of radar or lasers, is best explained by beginning with the ability to see and relay driving history of a violator. The pilot of an aircraft can observe the driving pattern of a violator for a least one-half mile prior to reporting the speed to a trooper on the ground.

Pilots have the ability to relay aggressive behavior of a violator not only as it relates to speed, but violations such as: following too close; erratic lane changes; improper passing; and general unsafe driving behavior, including reckless driving.

The data from the recent "Click-It-Or-Ticket" emphasis program reinforces the value an aircraft can add to the Patrol's traffic law enforcement efforts. Troopers during this emphasis working with the aircraft contacted 4,149 violators. Out of these traffic stops, 13 were commercial vehicles, 101 were aggressive drivers, 2 were DUI's, 273 had additional seat belt violations, 7 were reckless drivers, and 9 had some type of warrant.

In looking at a comparison from January to June 2001, to the same time period in 2002 the statistics for the aviation section are remarkable.

	2001	2002	%Change
Total Stops	2,410	9,428	+291%
Commercial Vehicles	114	124	+9%
Aggressive Driving Tickets	Not Tracked	235	N/A
DUI	2	7	+250%
Warrants	6	37	+516%
Reckless Driving Tickets	15	30	+100%
Seat Belt Violations	Not Tracked	500	N/A

In addition to expanding the traditional aircraft functions in speed reduction, the WSP has implemented a pilot project to study the effectiveness of combining aviation with Aggressive Driving Apprehension Team (ADAT) vehicles. The stealth component of each of these tools is necessary to identify and apprehend those drivers that pose one of the greatest threats to the general motoring public. There are few things that can compare to the effectiveness of the aircraft in observing unsafe driving behavior, while remaining undetected.

The men and women of the Washington State Patrol are continuing to make a difference.

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